



**Frederick County
Government
Frederick, Maryland**

News Release

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COUNTY RELINQUISHES HEAD START TO FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

FREDERICK, MD – Due to continuing efforts to reduce the budget deficit without raising taxes, the Frederick Board of County Commissioners today voted to relinquish the Head Start program to the federal government. The board assured citizens that services for county children and families in the program would continue.

The move will provide budgetary savings of approximately \$2.3 million, the county's portion of Head Start funding.

Board President Blaine Young said, "The board today made the difficult decision to relinquish the federally funded Head Start program. We appreciate all the feedback we have received from the public and want to emphasize that Head Start services will continue in Frederick County. We thank the Head Start employees for providing high quality services to the families and children in this program, but these are challenging times. Due to the budget situation for this year as well as the looming deficits for future years, we believe it is in the best interest of our taxpayers to relinquish our role as a Head Start grantee."

He continued, "Not only did the board make a program decision, but today's action was a personnel decision. Typically, personnel decisions are made in a closed session, but we brought the matter before the public in an open session because it dealt with a program. Approximately 80 employees are impacted by our action today."

Last month, the board informed the federal Head Start office of intentions to voluntarily relinquish grants from the program. The board pointed to the current challenging budget situation and uncertainty of state legislative actions as reasons for considering transition of the program to the federal government.

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The Regional III Head Start Office responded to the board with sincere appreciation for providing many years of high quality services to the children in Frederick County and expressed a commitment to ensure a smooth transition of services.

Due to the county's decision to relinquish the program, the federal Head Start office has assigned Community Development Institute Head Start (CDI HS), a Denver-based contractor experienced with such transitions, to take over program management on March 1 until a new grantee is secured.

CDI HS has held the federal Head Start contract for over 10 years and has operated 130 programs in 40 states, including Maryland. The firm has extensive experience in facilitating the program.

CDI HS will guide the local staff, Head Start Policy Council, parents and community organizations through the transition process. The contractor will also conduct an internal job fair to offer the possibility of employment for current Head Start employees who would be invited to apply for positions with the contractor.

In related action, the board also agreed to lease the current Head Start classrooms in county-owned buildings to CDI HS at no cost until a new grantee takes over the program. This arrangement will provide approximately \$94,000 of in-kind service annually to CDI HS, foster an orderly transfer of the program to the federal government and maximize grant funds that may be used for staffing needs.

The Board of County Commissioners will notify Head Start families, staff and community partners of the decision to relinquish the program to the federal government.

Once the transition process is implemented, the federal government will begin procedures to rebid the grant for a new provider of Head Start services in Frederick County.

The current Head Start program within the Citizens Services Division operates 16 classrooms serving at least 282 three- and four-year old children and has approximately 80 employees. The county has operated the program for more than 40 years.

Frederick County is the only county government in Maryland to provide Head Start management and funds for the program. Most programs are operated by non-profit organizations or school systems. Baltimore City is the only government organization that is a Head Start grantee.

Grant funding for the Head Start program that is provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and other sources is approximately \$2.2 million. Frederick County's projected FY2012 budget would have provided an additional \$2.3 million for the program for a total of \$4.5 million.

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The county commissioners are looking at avenues on every level of Frederick County Government in order to address budget challenges in this fiscal year and those to come. The decision to relinquish the Head Start program to the federal government is one step in these ongoing efforts, which have included the recent consolidation and reorganization of many county divisions.

In consideration of the personal impact that job eliminations and salary reductions will have on employees, before the county issues a press release, the employees affected are notified in advance. This notification process provides information to the public and media representatives promptly, while treating the employees with respect and consideration for their personal interests.

County Manager Barry Stanton and representatives from the Citizens Services and Human Resources Divisions met with Head Start employees yesterday to prepare them for the possibility of a transfer of the program to the federal government, to answer questions and to review personnel procedures when an employee ends employment with county government.

All Head Start employees impacted by the elimination of positions will receive severance pay and payment for their accrued leave, continuation of their health insurance for one month and assistance from Frederick County Workforce Services.

Head Start is a national program that promotes school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children through the provision of educational, health, nutritional, social and other services to enrolled children and families.

For additional information about Head Start, contact Citizens Services Division Director Margaret Nusbaum at 301-600-1447 or via e-mail at mnusbaum@FrederickCountyMD.gov.

For additional information regarding the federal government's role or issues related to the transition of services, contact the Health and Human Services' [Administration for Children and Families](#) Office of Public Affairs at 202-401-9215.

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